

Autumn newsletter 2009.

The man that started it all.



I had the pleasure to meet the man that started it all; a quiet, intellectual man by the name of Dr Albert Witnall who wouldn't take "no" for an answer. Over 40 years ago, Dr Witnall moved down from Birmingham to take up a new post as the local GP in Cemmaes Road. After living temporarily in a flat in Penegroes, Dr Witnall moved to a lovely family home in Machynlleth, where he still lives with his wife, Eileen.

Eileen welcomed me with a warm smile and a cup of tea. There was a fresh sea trout in his game bag just inside the kitchen door – Dr Witnall had just returned from fishing the Dyfi. He is the sort of man that you have instant rapport with. We sat in his lounge and he started to talk about how the club started.

As a keen shooting man, he wanted to pursue one of his passions – wildfowling. So, Dr Witnall was put in touch with an established wildfowling club but was refused membership because he did not live local to the club! He thought that it was ridiculous that a person who lived local to the estuary was denied membership. So, not being the sort of person to be easily deterred, he decided to call a meeting with a view to starting a new club that would accept membership from anyone that shared his passion whether they lived locally or came from afar.

He also remembers that, at the time, the RSPB were campaigning for the whole estuary to be designated as a nature reserve and for shooting to be banned on the Dyfi estuary. He said, "we were all loners" and didn't find it easy to club together. However, he recognised that although wildfowling was essentially a solitary pursuit and wildfowlers liked to operate alone, Dr Witnall felt very strongly that the only way to safeguard wildfowling on the Dyfi was to unite and form a club. He also realised that a cornerstone of preserving the right to shoot on the estuary was establishing a legal right to shoot; and that would only be granted to an organised group rather than a collection of individuals operating on their own account.

The inaugural meeting took place on Thursday 16th December 1965 at The Wynnstay Arms Hotel, Machynlleth. In attendance were Dr Albert Witnall, Mr W Aylward, Mr J N Evans, Mr E P Evans, Mr W Edwards, Mr K Fletcher, Mr D Goodbody, Mr H Jones, Mr D Jones, Mr L Jones, Mr D L Jones, Mr J W Jones, Mr E Lewis, Mr J G Lewis, Dr T Tibbut-Davies.

'Paddy' Aylward was elected as the first Chairman, Keith Fletcher as Secretary and Albert Witnall as Treasurer.

It was agreed at the first meeting that WAGBI be informed of the existence of the club and membership should be obtained. He recalls that when WAGBI were approached, he was told that a new club couldn't be formed. When they were told that it was too late because one had already been formed, John Anderton made arrangements to come down to Machynlleth and sort the matter out. Dr

Witnall recalls that Paddy Aylward was exactly what we needed because, "he was a big bombastic bugger!" Apparently, the next meeting at The Wynnstay Arms Hotel got so heated that John Anderton had to sneak out the back door! Although WAGBI initially wouldn't accept the Association as members, The Dyfi and District Wildfowlers' Association was finally accepted on 26th September 1967 – almost two years later.

He remembers Frank Wrigley as a very active member – "Frank was a male nurse, a good artist and he'd written a couple of books." He also remembers that Frank wrote an article on Greenland Whitefronted Geese, which was published in The Western Mail in 1973.

I asked Dr Witnall if he could recall any memorable stories. After some reflection he remembered that he was shooting on the estuary many years ago before the sanctuary was established with his dog, "Teal." He recalls, "there was a man, who shall remain nameless, stood about 60 yards to my left. I shot a mallard, which Teal had marked, but the man to my left claimed the bird as his and sent his dog to retrieve! I thought no more of it but noticed that Teal was missing. I looked behind me a few minutes later and there was the mallard that I'd shot. Over the next 20 minutes or so, Teal kept sloping off and collected every bird at the feet of this man and deposited them by my game bag!" We both laughed. "Teal was a bloody good retriever...and brilliant on woodcock. He's buried in the garden here"

He also remembers nearly drowning in the early 1970s. "I was out with Dai Jones from Shropshire and I borrowed someone's 8 bore while he was abroad on holiday. We were out on the flats off the Clettwr; a pack of wigeon came over and I fired this big 8 bore and missed. There were lots of wigeon about and another pack came over, which I managed to hit and they landed between us and the railway line. When I looked, the tide had come in behind us – so I sent Teal on, who waited by the railway line while we stripped off and waded up to our chest with the 8 bore above my head. Dai found it a bit of a struggle because he was renowned for wearing two of everything!" It was a joy and an honour to meet with Dr Albert Witnall and his wife, Eileen. I hope I get the opportunity again.

Robin Melley.

The new chairman.



Nick Powell was elected as the new Chairman at the AGM held on Friday 17th July 2009. For those that don't know Nick, he joined the club when he was 15 years old as a junior, and this will be his 26th year as a member. For the last 7 years he has served on the committee as Treasurer. He has implemented various changes to the role to make the job more efficient, along with safeguarding the club assets and making greater use of Association funds. Up until recently, he has produced and edited all of the newsletters and designed and produced the web site back in 2005.

Along with Michael Sherman and Kevin Lugg, he assisted in securing the sub-lease from CCW giving the club more security on the Dyfi Estuary. In these times of Health & Safety he assisted Michael Sherman with the H&S documentation, which you all have received.

Nick has worked tirelessly for the benefit of the Association; and has done so much behind the scenes to benefit all of us as members.

This is a personal message from Nick:

“Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to be your Chairman. My outlook for the future would be to secure additional ground in and around the Estuary for future generations to use and enjoy, thus securing the future of wildfowling on the Dyfi Estuary. This can only be achieved by all members working together. From September to February you will find me on the Estuary enjoying my wildfowling with my faithful companion "Lucy" the Labrador, so until the next newsletter have a most enjoyable season and may you keep your powder dry and shoot straight.”

The Committee & who does what.

Nick Powell – Chairman & Treasurer
Mike Sherman – Vice Chairman
Robin Melley – Secretary & PR Officer
George Hill – Vice President & Permit Officer
Peter Roberts – Permit Officer
Kevin Lugg – Land Access Officer & GIS Officer
Mike Hughes
Peter Croft
Chris Law
Ricky Jones
Simon Jones
Chris Davies
Connor Sherman
Paul Jackson
Tony Cusato

Wildfowlers' Recipes.

PEPPERPOT GOOSE

Serves 6

Set oven at Gas Reg.3 (170 Degrees C).

56 gr. Flour

2 tsp Salt

1 tsp Black Pepper

1/2 tsp Ginger

1 kg Of Canada Goose Breast (Diced)

4 tbs cooking Oil

2 Bay leaves

2 tsps Chilli sauce

226 gr. Mushrooms

1-1/2 cans Tomatoes

4 tbs soft brown Sugar

2 tbs Soy sauce

4 cloves Garlic

8 tbs Whisky

1 large red Pepper

1 large can red kidney Beans

Mix flour, salt, pepper and ginger and coat diced goose breasts

Brown in oil

Place in casserole (or pre heated slow cooker) and add bay leaves
Bind together chilli sauce, tomatoes plus juice, mushrooms, soy sauce, sugar, whisky and garlic and pour over goose. (If slow cooking bring to the boil and pour over goose breasts)
Cover and cook in oven reg.3, 170 degrees C for Lowest setting for 3 hours. (If slow cooking cook for 5hrs min) - Suggest test for tenderness at this stage
- if happy proceed as below if not continue to casserole/slow cook. (At this stage if eating next day – remove from heat and follow instructions below after re-heating the following day).
Stir in red pepper and kidney beans, cover and return to oven reg 3, 170 C (or continue slow cooking) for a final 30 mins
Remove bay leaves and serve with creamed mashed potatoes and boiled veg. Or just plain boiled rice.
Kevin Lugg © 2006-9

CHINESE GINGERED DUCK

Serves 4-6

4 Duck breasts, thinly sliced
50g (2oz) Fresh ginger, peeled and cut into fine strips.
2 tbs. Oil
50g (2oz) Flaked almonds
2 cloves garlic, crushed.
2 tbs. soy sauce
2 tbs. dry sherry
4 spring onions, finely shredded

Mix the duck with the ginger and leave, covered, for half an hour.
Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan and cook the almonds until golden brown. Transfer them to a plate with a slotted spoon. Add the garlic to the pan, then the duck and the ginger and stir fry for about 5 minutes or until the duck is just cooked.
Add all the other ingredients, except the almonds, and cook over a high heat for a few seconds.
Sprinkle the almonds on top and serve with egg noodles, beansprouts, and fine green beans.
Robin Melley © 2009

Obituary.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Dr Richard Groves, who passed away in January of this year following a long illness. His funeral was held on 2nd February at his local church in Ditton Priors, where he practiced as a GP. Richard had been a member for 10 years; and George Hill said a few words at the AGM and two minutes silence was held in remembrance.

Dyfi Valley awarded unique UN status.

The unique status means the area joins the likes of Uluru in Australia and Mount Olympus in Greece. There are 553 UNESCO Biosphere areas in the world, but the Dyfi is the only one in Wales and only the second in the whole of the UK.

In June, Environment Minister Jane Davidson announced that the Dyfi Valley has been officially recognised as Wales' only UNESCO Biosphere.
A Biosphere is a special area in which people work to balance the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. They are nominated by national governments.

Ms Davidson said the award was a flagship project for Wales:
"This status is a great honour not only for the area but also for Wales. The Dyfi Valley now joins a world-class group of special places for both people and nature. It provides a valuable example of how communities can live in a sustainable way."

“It is my hope that this special status can bring new opportunities for the environment, local culture and provide truly sustainable economic development.”

Pete Frost, from the Countryside Council for Wales, who is also Wales' representative on the UNESCO UK Man and Biosphere Committee said: “Being part of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves will raise the profile of the Dyfi Valley on the world stage. The elite status offers a golden opportunity to build a vibrant economy based on the area's fantastic natural assets, while also safeguarding local culture.”

The Dyfi was first designated a Biosphere in the 1970s, but rule changes in the 1990s meant sites had to reapply under new criteria. Today's decision means the whole of the Dyfi Valley, the area bounded from Aberystwyth, Llanbrynmair, Llanymawddwy, Corris Uchaf and Aberdyfi, will be part of a new Biosphere Dyfi Biosphere.

Allan Wynne Jones from the Dyfi Biosphere Partnership added:

“Over the next year the partnership will be working hard to help local people take advantage of this new opportunity. We hope residents will use the new status to get involved with local projects aimed at sustaining the local economy, environment and culture.”

“Our overall aim is for the Dyfi Valley to be recognised and respected internationally and locally, not only for its natural beauty, heritage and wildlife, but also for its people's efforts to make a positive contribution to a more sustainable world.”

New website.

Nick Powell has modernized and upgraded the website. It has also been moved. Please visit it at www.dyfiwildfowlers.org.uk

It would help the Association reduce costs if we could send future newsletters and communications out to you as members by email. It would also mean that we can communicate more often. So, if you haven't already done so, would you let us have your email address.

Thanks.

Robin Melley.